

## Claims

1. A method of electronically coupling rail vehicles in stop areas of in short-distance rail transport systems, wherein a rail vehicle with zero speed or with a speed below a predetermined minimum speed transmits a message which contains propulsion and braking control information or ready signals for activating an electronic drawbar for a following rail vehicle, and that after reception of the message from the rail vehicle ahead, the following rail vehicle approaches the rail vehicle ahead up to a predetermined distance.
2. A method as set forth in claim 1, wherein after approaching the rail vehicle ahead up to the predetermined distance, the following rail vehicle is operated by means of the propulsion and braking control information received from the rail vehicle ahead.
3. Apparatus for electronically coupling rail vehicles in stop areas of stopping points in short-distance rail transport systems, wherein a control unit and a transceiver unit are provided which are interconnected, and that the control unit is designed to determine the speed of a

rail vehicle and, if the speed is zero or below a predetermined minimum speed, to control the transceiver unit in such a way as to transmit a message which contains propulsion and braking control information or ready signals for activating an electronic drawbar for a following rail vehicle.

4. Apparatus as set forth in claim 3, wherein a distance sensor is provided which is connected to the control unit, that the distance sensor is arranged and designed to measure the distance to a following rail vehicle and to transfer the measurement result to the control unit, and that the control unit is designed to compare the measurement result with a maximum value and to stop the transmission of the message if the measurement result exceeds the maximum value.
5. Apparatus as set forth in claim 3, wherein a distance sensor is provided which is connected to the control unit, that the distance sensor is arranged and designed to measure the distance to a following rail vehicle and to transfer the measurement result to the control unit, and that the control unit is designed to compare the measurement result with a minimum value or with a predetermined or communicated distance and to stop the transmission of the message if the measurement result is less than the minimum value or not equal to the distance.
6. Apparatus as set forth in claim 3, wherein the transceiver unit is designed to transfer a received

platform exit signal or information on the reception of this signal to the control unit, and that the control unit is designed to stop the transmission of the message after reception of the platform exit signal or of the information thereon.

7. Apparatus as set forth in claim 3, wherein the transceiver unit is designed to transfer a received platform entry signal or information on the reception of this signal to the control unit, and that the control unit is so designed that after reception of the platform entry signal or the information thereon and if a zero speed was determined, it controls the transceiver unit to transmit a message which contains propulsion and braking control information or ready signals for activating an electronic drawbar for the other rail vehicle.
8. Apparatus as set forth in claim 3, wherein the transceiver unit is designed to transfer a message received from the following rail vehicle or information on the reception of this message to the control unit, and that the control unit is so designed that after reception of the message from the following rail vehicle or of the information thereon and if a zero speed or a speed below a predetermined minimum speed was determined, it controls the transceiver unit to transmit a message which contains propulsion and braking control information for the other rail vehicle.

9. Apparatus for electronically coupling rail vehicles in stop areas in short-distance rail transport systems, wherein a control unit and a transceiver unit are provided which are interconnected, that the transceiver unit is designed to transfer a message received from a rail vehicle ahead or information on the reception of this message to the control unit, and that the control unit is so designed that after reception of the message from the rail vehicle ahead or of the information thereon, it controls the following rail vehicle in such a way that it approaches the rail vehicle ahead up to a predetermined distance or a minimum value.
10. Apparatus as set forth in claim 9, wherein the control unit is so designed that after reception of the message from the rail vehicle ahead or of the information thereon, it controls the transceiver unit to transmit a message which contains ready signals for activating an electronic drawbar for the rail vehicle ahead.
11. Apparatus as set forth in claim 9, wherein a distance sensor is provided which is connected to the control unit, that the distance sensor is arranged and designed to measure the distance to the rail vehicle ahead and to transfer the measurement result to the control unit, and that the control unit is designed to compare the measurement result with a minimum value or a predetermined distance and to control the rail vehicle in such a way that it approaches the rail

vehicle ahead up to the minimum value or the predetermined distance at the most.

12. Apparatus as set forth in claim 9, wherein the transceiver unit is designed to transfer a message received from the rail vehicle ahead, containing propulsion and braking control information, to the control unit, and that the control unit is so designed that after reception of the message from the rail vehicle ahead and after the approach to the rail vehicle ahead up to the predetermined distance, it controls the rail vehicle in such a way that it is operated by means of the propulsion and braking control information received from the rail vehicle ahead.
13. A computer program for a control unit for electronically coupling rail vehicles in stop areas in short-distance rail transport systems, wherein at zero speed or at a speed below a predetermined minimum speed, a message is generated which contains propulsion and braking control information or ready signals for activating an electronic drawbar for a following rail vehicle.
14. A computer program for a control unit for electronically coupling rail vehicle in stop areas in short-distance rail transport systems, wherein upon reception of a message from a rail vehicle ahead, containing propulsion and braking control information or ready signals for activating an electronic drawbar,

control signals are generated for controlling the following rail vehicle in such a way that it approaches the rail vehicle ahead up to a predetermined distance.